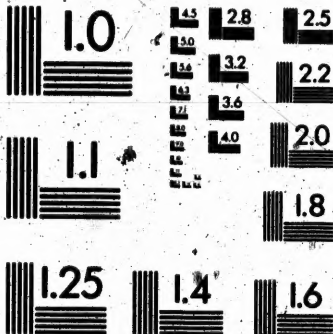


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UPON

THE SUBJECT

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

DELIVERED AT RICEVILLE, 21ST DEC., 1856,

BY

REV. D. N. ROBINSON,

MINISTER OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CANADA.

HAMILTON:

PRINTED AT THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE BOOK AND JOB OFFICE, JOHN STREET,

1857.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following discourse being written amid the pressure of other important duties, the reader will, therefore, please pardon any defect which may appear in its literary arrangement.

The apologies offered for presenting to the public the ensuing pages, are (1), a request from various friends, members and ministers of the M. E. Church ; (2), a hope that some may be profited by a perusal of the same.

THE AUTHOR.

L'Original, December, 1856.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

"BE BAPTIZED."—*Acts ii. 38.*

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM is a theme which has engaged the careful attention of the most profound intellect. It has been ably considered in the study, the pulpit, and the social circle. The pen has been wielded, and huge volumes have been written, as expositions of the doctrine. Yet, there are many who have but wavering views of this subject, while the minds of others are wavering in the matter. A consciousness of this fact leads us to a consideration of this topic at the present time. And, as we approximate this great and worthy theme, we earnestly implore the enlightening and directing influences of the Holy Spirit, that our remarks may perfectly accord with the Truth of God. As there is not so great a variety of opinions in regard to the nature of Baptism, we deem it profitable, at present, to discuss but casually that branch of the subject, and confine our remarks, more especially, to the *subjects* and the *mode*.

We will, therefore, notice—

I. The proper subjects for Baptism.

No person of reason, who has carefully perused the Bible, and embraced the cardinal tenets of the Christian religion, can for a moment presume to deny that adult believers are proper subjects to receive the sacrament of Baptism. We do not deny it. But we verily believe they are. Consequently, we shall not waste our time, upon the present occasion, to prove that justified adults who were not, in infancy, dedicated to God in this ordinance, are fit subjects for the reception of this sacrament. But the *great* question is, "Are infants proper subjects for Baptism?" To which we reply in the affirmative, that we truly believe they are. And we shall here endeavor to substantiate our position by the Word of God.

The Scriptures do not prohibit infant Baptism. After a careful and impartial perusal of the records of Divine Truth,

we conclude that there is not one sentence contained therein that forbids the offering of infants to the Lord in this ordinance. The New Testament nowhere declares that John the Baptist, or any of the Apostles, ever rejected an infant or raised his voice against the validity of infantile Baptism. Neither is it hinted at, that when the child of a believing parent had reached the years of maturity, he was baptized upon a profession of faith. Neither can any individual lay his finger upon a solitary portion of the Word of God, that declares, either directly or indirectly, that adult persons alone are to receive the immunities of this sacrament. Could this be done, the matter would be forever settled.

If the Scriptures exhibit no prohibition to this doctrine, do they contain anything favorable to the same? We answer. They do. Every reader of the Old Testament must be sensible of the fact that infants enjoyed an indisputable right to church membership. And it cannot be shown that their right to this has ever terminated; or, that the blessed Saviour has ever closed the door against them. Were the New Testament entirely mute in regard to infants, what would be the great result? It would not in the least affect their position or privileges. It would only be leaving them to occupy the same place and enjoy the same privileges that they always had. For what God has once established, must inevitably remain in full force until he supersedes or disannuls it. God constituted infants members of the visible church, in the days of Abraham; and we cannot find that he has ever repealed that constitution; therefore, it is evident that he considers them members of his church at the present time.

But the New Testament is in no wise silent upon this matter. It gladdens our hearts with the discovery that the blessed Saviour remembers little infants. And he exhibits that remembrance in such a manner as to convince us that he has acknowledged and confirmed their standing in the church. Mark x. 13, 14, 16.—“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. And

he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them, and blessed them." We behold here,

1. The Saviour receiving in his arms the little ones that were brought to him.

2. We find him displeased with his disciples for rebuking those who brought them.

3. He declares, that of such is the kingdom of God. Now, if it be right for the Saviour to open his arms and embrace infants, is it not perfectly consistent for the church to embrace them? In fact, has the church the least right to reject infants, so long as her Founder and Head receives them? We answer, she has not.

And if Christ was displeased, and informed his disciples of their error, when they rebuked the people who brought the infants unto him, should not every true follower of Christ labor to show those who would keep infants from the church of God, their error?

Again: seeing that Christ has declared them proper subjects for the kingdom of God, or in other words, the visible church, has any person license to say they are not qualified for the same? Let us be cautious how we act in this matter. Do not let us presume to close a door which Omnipotence has thrown open. Christ has opened the door of the church to infants, and no man can shut it.

It may here be remarked, that the phrase, "kingdom of God," in the above passage, signifies the church triumphant. We reply that, if we accept this signification of the phrase, it furnishes us with a still stronger argument. For, if Christ has asserted, that of such is heaven, we may be assured that they are worthy a situation in the visible church; because no one is qualified for the church triumphant, who is not for the church militant.

Some may here plead, that the persons received by the Saviour, were adults who were but infants in the cause of God. This could not be the case; for the Saviour *took them up in his arms*; or, in other words, *lifted* them up. It appears very unreasonable to suppose that he would *lift adults up in his arms* to bless them. Were he about to impart his blessing to such, it

seems quite probable that, instead of *lifting* them, he might simply place his hands upon them; and, in fact, he frequently conferred great blessings upon adults without even doing this. He spake and it was done. But the evangelists tell us, they were *young children, little children, infants, &c.*

The great objection which is here presented by many, that these infants were not brought to Christ to be baptized by him and that he administered to them no such sacrament, is altogether inapplicable. For we do not presume to contend for the validity of infant Baptism, because we fancy that these infants were baptized by Christ; but we argue it from the fact that we believe the Saviour acknowledged them members of the visible church; and if they are members of the church, it necessarily follows that they are proper subjects for Baptism. For no one is worthy to be considered a church member, who is unfit to receive baptism.

The interrogation may be made, "if those children were proper subjects for Baptism, why did not the Saviour administer it?" To which, we answer; we know not but they had previously been baptized. The Scriptures do not speak otherwise. But of what import is it to us, whether or not they had, antecedently, been baptized? Did not Christ exhibit as sure a token of their church membership as Baptism itself, when he took the little lambs in his arms, and tendered to them his blessing, at the same period declaring that "of such is the kingdom of God?"

We acknowledge the silence of the Saviour upon the subject of infant Baptism. But this silence does not testify against the doctrine. Although he does not speak in express terms in favor of the practice, yet he does not say one word against it, any more than against the Baptism of adults. But the subject in consideration is, whether they were, by the Saviour, considered church members, or not. Which, we think, appears quite evident, from what we have already stated. If it can be made to appear that the Abrahamic and Christian Covenants are the same, the validity of infant Baptism will be clearly discernible. It must here be remembered that the Abrahamic Covenant embraced infants. Therefore, it will necessarily follow that if the covenant under which we live, be the same, infants are included in

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in it. Gen. xvii. 7, &c.—“ I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession ; and I will be their God.” Here is a covenant of grace, containing most precious promises.

1. *That God would be their God.* All the privileges of the covenant, all its joys, and all its hopes, are summed up in this ; a man need desire no more than this to make him happy. What God is himself, that he will be to his people ; his wisdom theirs, to guide and counsel them ; his power theirs, to protect and support them ; his goodness theirs, to supply and comfort them.

2. *That Canaan should be their everlasting possession.* God had before promised this land to Abraham and his seed—chap. xv. 18. But here, where it is promised for an *everlasting* possession, surely it must be looked upon as a type of heaven's happiness—that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God. This is that better country, to which Abraham had an eye, and the grant of which was that which answered to the vast extent and compass of that promise, that God would be to them a God ; so that, if God had not designed and prepared this, he would have been ashamed to be called their God ; as we find implied in Heb. xi. 16.

To this covenant was attached the seal of circumcision, 9 and 10 verses, “ And God said to Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee : Every man-child among you shall be circumcised.” We here discover a gracious covenant enwrapped in most cheering promises, touching both temporal and spiritual blessings, and made secure with the seal of circumcision, which seal was an act of faith in its promises, and a pledge to perform its conditions on the part of his descendants. Now, it is very evident from the writings of Paul, that the benefits of this covenant are extended to the believing Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Gal. iii. 14.—“ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.”

Some strive to confound the Abrahamic Covenant and the

Ceremonial Law, to prove, that when the one was abolished by the death of Christ, the other must necessarily be. But there is just as clear a distinction between them, as there is between black and white. Paul asserts, Gal. iii. 17, "That the covenant that was confirmed before of God, in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of non-effect." We are here taught that the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed of God, in Christ, and held not the least relationship to the Ceremonial Law; that the Law was four hundred and thirty years after the Covenant, and was also a temporary affair; but that the Covenant was abiding; it could not be disannulled by the Law, but would remain permanent, when the Law of Ceremonies was no more. The Ceremonial Law is now abolished. Christ has offered himself, once for all, a sacrifice for sin. But the Covenant remains as firm as the word of God itself, which can never pass away. As the Covenant had Christ for its great foundation, it must therefore, under the gospel dispensation, be more fully realized than ever. Again the Apostle says, Rom. xv. 8,— "That Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." This text teaches us that, instead of our children losing, they positively gain; for Christ came not to make void the promises of God, but to confirm them. To confirm, does not signify to abolish, or even to weaken; but rather, to add strength, or to make more firm.

That the Covenant was perpetual, is established by express scriptural testimony, 1 Chron. xvi. 15.— "Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant." Ps. cv. 8.— "He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant. Read Heb. vi. 13—17. What language more explicit could be used to prove the perpetuity of this covenant? It is here termed an *everlasting covenant*, declared to be "commanded to a thousand generations," made certain by the

oath of Omnipotence, "by which God hath shown the immutability of his counsel."

Now, we wish to impress upon your minds, that this covenant is "commanded to a *thousand generations*." How then can it have ceased? For you will readily perceive by referring to the first chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, that but forty-two generations intervened between Abraham and Christ. Consequently, we conclude that the Abrahamic Covenant must continue nine hundred and fifty-eight generations after the birth of Christ; which term may, possibly, place a period to time. We are apprised of the fact, that a definite number is sometimes used by the Almighty for an indefinite one. But can we imagine that he would say "a *thousand generations*," when he intended but *forty-two*? When he expresses himself in a definite number for an indefinite one, he should be understood to signify the full definite number, if not more. He proclaims the cattle upon a thousand hills, to belong to him. Now are we to understand him to mean less than a thousand hills? Or is it limited to a thousand? No. We are to understand here that all the cattle upon all the hills of our earth belong to him. So when he speaks of the covenant being "commanded to a thousand generations," it is very evident that he intends not less than a thousand. In short, he means all the generations down to the end of time.

Paul compares the church to an "olive tree." And he gives us to understand that this tree has never been plucked up; but that some of the branches (the unbelieving Jews) have been broken off, and the believing Gentiles grafted in; which grafted branches, he declares, partake "of the root and fatness of the olive tree;" which signifies that the unnatural branches (the believing Gentiles) enjoy the same immunities as the natural branches, or believing Jews, enjoy. Hence we learn that the tree has not been cut down or plucked up. The trunk has remained steadfast. Some branches have been severed from the parent body, but others have been selected to occupy the vacancy.

What we have stated, sufficiently proves that the Abrahamic Covenant was a Covenant of grace; that circumcision was its seal; that it included infants; and that the Covenant under

which we live, is the same. It will therefore follow that Baptism occupies the place of circumcision.

If Baptism does not succeed circumcision, then we have no ordinance answering to that Jewish rite; consequently, by the coming of the Saviour, the Christian church has been deprived of a sacrament which was considered of great advantage under the Jewish dispensation. Rom. iii. 1, 2.—“What advantage, then, hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way.” Now, it is evident that, if Baptism does not take the place of circumcision, the church suffers a severe loss by having no ordinance to succeed that of circumcision.

The analogy between various particulars of the two rites, proves Baptism to be the successor of circumcision. Circumcision was the sacrament of admission into the Jewish church. Baptism is the sacrament of admission into the Christian church. Circumcision was in reality a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of the righteousness of faith. Baptism is the same. Circumcision was a badge of relation to the God of Israel. So is Baptism a badge of relation to Christ. Does not this similarity of office-work show Baptism to be instituted in the stead of circumcision?

A striking likeness in the administration of the two sacraments, presents itself. When the child was circumcised, they gave him a name. Luke i. 59.—“And it came to pass, that on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child, and they called him Zacharias.” Again, Luke ii. 21.—“When the eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.” In administering the sacrament of Baptism, a name is given to the subject. The question may be here instituted, “Whence originated the custom of calling a person's name in the administration of the rite of circumcision?” We answer, that the custom was originated by God himself. When he instituted this sacrament, he gave a name to Abraham, and also to his wife. Gen. xvii. 5 and 15. Consequently, as the custom has God for its origin, the name given in either of those ordinances, is sacred. Various Scripture passages have an allusion to the custom of calling God's name over the circumcised child. 2 Chron. vii. 14.—“If my people which are called by my name.” Amos, ix. 12.—“And all the heathen which

are called by my name." Acts, xv. 17.—"And all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." These passages indicate the practice of calling the name of the Almighty over the child circumcised, and also foretells that his name should be called upon the Gentiles. This was accomplished when the sacrament of Baptism was administered to them, as the ordinance of admission into the church and covenant of God. They were baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The interrogation is frequently proposed, "If Baptism succeeds circumcision, why are females baptized?" To which we reply, that we have no reason to believe that females were neglected in the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised his blessings to the seed of Abraham. And are not females as well as males, the seed of Abraham? The Almighty did not inform the ancient patriarch that his covenant included simply the male population of his seed, while the female portion was rejected.

If females were included in promise, what was the method of receiving them into the church? It is quite probable that it was by baptizing them. Various authentic writers state that Gentile proselytes and their children were first baptized, after which the males submitted to the rite of circumcision. Consequently the mode of receiving into the church female proselytes, was Baptism. By what authority did they administer this sacrament to female proselytes? How did they know that this method of receiving them was acceptable to God? In short, what ever led them to think of such a method of receiving them? It is altogether probable that they received Jewish females in this mode, and that God authorized it. That such was their method, seems implied in Acts viii. 12.—"And they were baptized *both* men and women." This text indicates that Baptism had formerly been practised upon *one* sex, but that it was something new to baptize *both* sexes.

It is stated by some that circumcision made a visible mark in the flesh, by which the standing of a person might be recognized; but Baptism leaves no such mark, therefore it does not answer to circumcision. We answer, that it was not by the visibility of the mark that the standing was proved; but by the registry of the circumcision. The mark would avail but little, if the circumcision were not registered. Ezra, ii. 62.—"These

sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore were they as polluted put from the priesthood." Again, Neh. vii. 5.—"And my God put it into mine heart, to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein." We are here taught that the mark was but a trifle, if the name could not be found upon the records. Their circumcisions were required to be recorded, as our Baptisms are. This is evidence that Baptism is the successor of circumcision.

Others remark that Baptism, to take the place of circumcision, should be administered upon the eighth day; otherwise it is not valid. But the Scriptures teach the validity of circumcision administered upon any day. Ex. xii. 48.—"And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land." Also, Josh. v. 2, &c. These portions of Scripture prove the validity of the circumcision of even adults. Therefore Baptism may occupy the place of circumcision, and be administered upon the eighth, or any other day.

The Apostles baptized whole households. But it is said, we are not informed that there were any infants in those houses. We acknowledge the silence of the New Testament upon this matter. But what does its silence prove? If, as we have shown, Baptism takes the place of circumcision, the Baptism of infants was so much a matter of course, as to need no remark. The doctrine of Christian Baptism is not being discussed by the sacred writers, in those passages which speak of the Baptism of households. While this is the case, should we not expect them, when speaking of the Baptism of whole families, to include the members of such families, in general terms? As long as they did not intend to speak of infant Baptism doctrinally or distinctly, how could the fact be more naturally expressed, than to say such an one was baptized, "and all his house?" In the same manner would a modern missionary express himself. Suppose a Chinese with his whole family, receive the sacrament of Baptism from the hand of the Christian missionary laboring

among them. The missionary wishes to report the fact to his friends at home. And so long as he did not intend to speak distinctly or doctrinally upon the subject of infant Baptism, would he not be more inclined to say, "I baptized such a gentleman and all his house," than to say, "Such a man, with his wife, adult children, and even the little infant, received from my hand the sacrament of Baptism?" It is reasonable to suppose that he would include the various members of the family in general terms.

It cannot be proved that in the house of the Philippian jailer, or in that of Lydia, or in that of Stephanus, there were no infants. And if there were infants, they were baptized; for Baptism was administered to the whole household. And it appears very probable that in some of these houses, if not in all, there were infant children.

It may here be remarked by some, that infants cannot believe; consequently, there could have been none in the house of the jailer, for it is said, "he believed, and all his house." This is not the only believing family from which infants must be excluded. To say nothing of the houses of Lydia and Stephanus, the nobleman of Cæpernaum is said to have believed, and all his house. John iv. 53. Again, Cornelius is said to be one who feared God, "and all his house."—Acts x. 2. Also, Crispus is said to have believed, and all his house.—Acts xviii. 8. And from what immediately follows, it would appear that they were baptized. Will any one presume to say that there were no infants in any of those families? Is it not very probable that the phrases, "believing with all his house," and "fearing God with all his house," embrace children under believing adults, whose pious example they would be likely to follow, and whose religious sentiments they would be inclined to receive, so that they might with propriety be termed a Christian family? How frequently do we say of certain families, that they are believing, or God-fearing families, while there are young children included in those domestic circles, who are not capable of exercising faith, or exhibiting piety? The expressions would signify that those who were capable of believing, exercised that capability, and it was expected that the younger members of those families, would, as they grew in years, follow in the footsteps of the elder.

Hence, a family may be termed a pious one, a believing one, or a God-fearing one, and, at the same time, embrace infants. Therefore, to say that, because it is said, "the jailers, or any other household, believed," there could be no infants included, displays a want of candor and reason in the matter.

Many object to the doctrine of infant Baptism, because the Apostle said, "*believe* and be baptized. "Infants cannot believe," say they, "therefore infants should not be baptized." Circumcision required faith; the infants under the Abrahamic Covenant could not *believe*; shall we, therefore, conclude that those infants were not proper subjects for circumcision? We virtually say this, if we argue that infants should not be baptized, because they cannot *believe*. Consequently, when God said to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 10, "Every man-child among you shall be circumcised," he told him to circumcise improper subjects. Let us be very careful that we do not challenge the Almighty, by contending against infant Baptism, because of the incapacity of infants to *believe*. When parents circumcised their infants, the faith of those parents answered for the infants. God caused the parents to perform the child's act. So it is in the Baptism of infants. Those children which Christ took in his arms were *brought* to him. And who brought them? Probably the parents. If it were not, it is evident that it must have been persons who had faith to obtain a blessing for them. For Christ received them in his arms, and blessed them; not according to their own faith, but according to the faith of those who brought them. Infants, through incapacity of believing, are no more disqualified for Baptism than they were for circumcision. The same argument that proves against the Baptism of infants, will evidently prove against their salvation. For, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Infants cannot believe; but shall we conclude that infants shall be damned? No! for Christ declared that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Faith, as a condition, is required of none but those who are capable of its exercise. Infants cannot believe, therefore they are not required to exercise faith in order to be proper subjects for Baptism. Under the Abrahamic Covenant, faith, before circumcision, was required of none but adults; so, under the gospel dispensation, faith before Baptism is required of none but adults.

The interrogation is very frequently instituted, "Is Baptism, administered by an unconverted minister, to the child of impious parents, valid." We answer, it is. For infant Baptism is independent of the piety of either minister or parents. Its validity is not based upon the faith of those who offer the child, or him who administers the sacrament; but entirely upon the will of the Saviour. We have antecedently shown that infants belong to Christ. This forms much better ground for baptizing them than the piety of their parents. The case of infants, in this respect, appears much more satisfactory than that of adults who profess justifying faith; for we are confident that infants are in a state of justification through the merits of Christ, but we cannot be so certain of the sincerity of professing adults. On this basement, the claim of infants to the sacrament of Baptism appears much more distinct than that of adult professors.

If impiety in a minister renders Baptism invalid, or makes void its obligation, it necessarily follows that impiety in the administrator, will give invalidity to every ordinance of the church in which he engages, therefore the church is immediately thrown into the utmost disorder; for it is utterly impossible for any individual to ascertain with absolute assurance, whether sincerity or hypocrisy is predominant, in the breast of the administrator. If he exhibit hypocrisy in this matter, he alone is chargeable. Because God will never permit the innocent person to suffer on account of the hypocrisy of the minister. Thus we discover that a want of piety in either minister or parents, does not cause the Baptism of infants to be invalid.

The antiquity of the practice of baptizing infants is weighty evidence in its favor. If the Apostles of the blessed Saviour did not baptize infants, at what time and in what place did the practice originate? Had the practice been introduced into the church subsequently to the days of the Apostles, would not its introduction have been noticed by some writer? There is no doubt that it would have caused great discussion in the church. Late in the second century, Tertullian spoke against infant Baptism; but his speaking upon the subject, proved the practice to be older than himself. And it is evident that this opposition which he presented, soon became extinct. For Augustine, who flourished in the fourth century, says, that he "never heard of

any Christian, Catholic or sectary, who taught any other doctrine than that infants are to be baptized." Although Tertullian opposed it, he allowed that infants should be baptized, *if their lives were in danger*. Justyn Martyr of the second century, and Origen of the third, explicitly mention infant Baptism as the practice of their times. Irenæus, who was born about the period of the death of the apostle John, expressly mentions the Baptism of infants. We should bear in mind how very near to the Apostles' time this writer flourished. There must have been Christians living in the days of Irenæus, who were cotemporaries with the Apostle John. Hence, had Irenæus introduced the practice, those Christians would have detected it, as being an invention of his own. Therefore, we infer that infant Baptism was practised by the Apostles themselves.

The fact is, that the validity of infant Baptism was never questioned by any Christian sect until about the year 1030, when one Peter De Bruijs, a Frenchman, asserted that infants were not capable of receiving salvation, therefore, should not be baptized. He had a few followers; but the sect soon became extinct. It was next challenged in Germany by a sect termed Anabaptists, about the year 1522.

From what we have stated, it evidently appears that the Abrahamic Covenant and the one under which we live, are the same—that Baptism succeeds circumcision, as the sign and seal of the covenant—that the Saviour acknowledged infants proper subjects for Baptism—that the Apostles performed the practice of baptizing them—that the custom has obtained throughout every succeeding century—and that it is our duty at the present time to offer our infant children to God in this sacrament.

Let us now contemplate,

II. The mode of Baptism.

Some affirm that there is but one mode of Baptism, and that is immersion. This they attempt to prove from the language of Paul, Eph. iv. 5—"One faith, one Lord, one baptism." Now, let us strictly observe the reading of this text—"One faith, one Lord; one *baptism*." The Apostle here says, one *Baptism*; not one *mode* of Baptism. I believe just as firmly in one Baptism, as any person can. And that is Christian Baptism—water applied to the subject in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost. Great stress is laid by some upon the signification of the term "baptize." But the word itself proves nothing, because its meaning is so various. The verb "baptize," with its derivatives, signifies to dip, to stain, to wet, to paint, to be overwhelmed, to be drowned, to sink, to immerse, to plunge, to be dyed, tinged, and imbued, to wash by effusion of water, to pour, to sprinkle, &c. We here discover the term to be of extensive application. It signifies, to *sprinkle*, as well as to *immerse*. Therefore the signification of the word proves no particular mode of Baptism. The religion of Jesus Christ is designed to be universal. Hence we find Christian ministers at the present day laboring in both frigid and torrid climates. We cannot for a moment believe that an all-wise and gracious God would prescribe and render imperative a mode of Baptism which could not with propriety be practised in all climates, and under all circumstances. The sacrament of Baptism, either by sprinkling or pouring, may be received by the weakly or dying, of either sex, in any climate, during any season of the year, without injury. The same cannot be said of immersion. We could name individuals who have, during the winter season, received, in this mode, the sacrament of Baptism,—the result was a severe cold, which, in a few months, terminated in death.

We are in no wise ignorant of the fact, that immersion was practised at quite an early period. We not only trace the practice back to the second century, but immersion three times, anointing with oil, signing with the sign of the cross, imposition of hands, eating milk and honey, putting on white garments, &c. These were all superstitious additions—the invention of men. We find this mentioned by Tertullian of the second century; who, though a man of eloquence, had very little judgment, and was filled with superstition worthy a darker age. Yet Tertullian did not presume to deny the validity of Baptism by sprinkling or pouring. To the sick and dying, he administered the sacrament by *sprinkling* water upon the face of the subject. In this he was much more liberal than many in our day. If sprinkling or pouring will answer in cases of sickness and death, it will answer in cases of health; for the Scriptures in no place assert that the afflicted and dying may receive the sacrament by *sprinkling*, while those in health must submit to a *harsher mode*.

We have carefully searched the New Testament upon this subject, and do affirm, that we cannot find one satisfactory case of immersion contained therein. John's Baptism is exhibited by many to prove immersion Scriptural. The great multitudes who went to him were baptized *in* Jordan, and *at* Enon, "because there was much water there;" consequently say they, immersion must have been the mode. We are not at all surprised to find John selecting a place where there was "much water;"

because "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," went to his Baptism. The term of his ministry continued but about eighteen months; yet it is computed that at least two millions of persons were baptized by him. Now, had John stood continually in the water, he could not have baptized all these by immersion. And to suppose that he was incessantly in the water, is very unreasonable. Along as such multitudes were continually flocking to him, it behooved him to resort to some spot where water was plenty; because a very great quantity of water would be required for other purposes, than that of baptizing. But here we should particularly notice, that it is invariably stated that John baptized *with* water. Mat. iii. 11.—"I indeed baptize you *with* water, he shall baptize you *with* the Holy Ghost." John i. 26.—"John answered them saying, I baptize *with* water." Acts i. 5.—"For John truly baptized *with* water; but ye shall be baptized *with* the Holy Ghost." John i. 33.—"But he that sent me to baptize *with* water." Here John says, he was sent to baptize *with* water. Now, if John's mode was immersion, why do we not find the preposition *in*, instead of the preposition *with*? Why did not John say, "I baptize you *in* water, but he shall baptize you *in* the Holy Ghost and *in* fire?" The same word here is used to express the Saviour's mode of spiritual Baptism, as is used to express John's mode of water Baptism. Jesus Christ baptized *with* the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire. He did this, not by applying the persons to, or plunging them *in* the Spirit or the fire; but by causing the Spirit and fire to descend upon them. Acts ii. 3, 4.—"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." All the accounts of the Baptism of the Spirit perfectly accord with what we read of the Spirit. The Spirit is said to be "from above." Ag. 1.—"I will pour out my Spirit," &c. When Christ received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, it "descended like a dove, and lighted upon him." When Cornelius and his family received the Spirit, it is said, the Holy Ghost *fell* on them who heard the word. Christ's mode of spiritual Baptism is exhibited to our view under the emblem of effusion, that is, either sprinkling or pouring. Now, if John's *water* Baptism was a shadow of the Saviour's *spiritual* Baptism, then verily John's mode of baptizing should be emblematic of the Saviour's mode. And we have shown his mode to be that of applying the element to the subject, not the subject to the element.

It is supposed by some, that because John baptized at Jordan, which was a large stream, and at Enon, because there was much water there, this is a strong proof of immersion. But we are told in John iv. 1, that the disciples of our blessed Lord baptized more than John; and we are not informed that they ever resorted to any large watering place; neither does it appear that

they were ever perplexed for want of a sufficiency of water. In fact, it does not appear that John always baptized at Jordan, or at Enon; for it is said that he began to baptize "in Bethabara beyond Jordan." And the Bible does not inform us of any river being there.

Much stress is laid upon the Baptism of Christ, by John, in Jordan. But for what reason was the Saviour baptized? He could not have been baptized "unto repentance," nor "for the remission of sins." Because he had committed no sin. He gives the reason of his Baptism—"to fulfil all righteousness." What are we to understand by the expression, "to fulfil all righteousness?" Our Saviour undoubtedly intended that to signify, that he must perform every iota of the righteous law of God, and the commission intrusted to him. What law required his baptism? It must have been the Ceremonial, for no other law has one word about baptizing. The truth of the matter is simply this: Christ appeared as a great High Priest to offer a sacrifice, once-for all, for the sins of the people. The Ceremonial Law required that every priest should be purified with water. Therefore, Christ must submit to this ordeal. And, for various reasons, John was the most suitable person to baptize him. This is why he was baptized. We are informed in Num. iv. 23, that they entered upon the work of the priesthood at the age of thirty. Consequently, that he fulfil the law, he must wait until he arrive at thirty, before he commence his ministration. Luke iii 23.—"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age."

The mode of baptizing the priests, under the Ceremonial Law, was *sprinkling*. Ex. xxix. 4, 40: 12.—"And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and thou shalt wash them with water." Num. viii. 7.—"And thus thou shalt do unto them to cleanse them; *sprinkle* water of purifying upon them." This law required the Baptism of Christ; and we must conclude that, in his Baptism, he submitted to the mode prescribed by that law, which was *sprinkling*. Therefore, because it is said, that Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, it is no proof that he was immersed. Wolfe, the missionary, tells us of a certain sect of Christians in Mesopotamia, who style themselves "followers of John the Baptist, who was a follower of Christ." Their method of baptizing is as follows: "They carry the children after thirty days to the river, the priest says a prayer, the godfather takes the child to the river, while the priest sprinkles it with water." Thus we have, in modern times, *river Baptism*, with *sprinkling*.

We have shown that it appears quite probable our Saviour was baptized with *sprinkling*. But no matter what mode John practised, his was not the Christian Baptism. And, if it was not

the Christian Baptism, his *mode* of baptizing was no precedent for us. * "The Baptism of John differs essentially in all the important circumstances and characters of it, from the Baptism instituted by Jesus Christ.

"1. The Christian Baptism originated in the commission given by Jesus Christ to his apostles after his resurrection, to go into all the world, to teach, or disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; whereas the Baptism of John had no such origin, but commenced full four years before, and even before John had any acquaintance with Jesus. 'And I knew him not,' says the Baptist—John i. 31. Surely, then, the Baptism of John could not be the same with that administered by the Apostles after the resurrection of our Lord.

"2. The Baptism of John was the Baptism of *repentance*, or reformation, as a preparation for the approaching kingdom of God. The Baptism instituted by Christ included an acknowledgement of a particular person, as the Lord of that kingdom already 'delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.'—Rom. iv. 25. Hence those Baptisms could not be one and the same.

"3. The Christian Baptism was invariably administered in the *name of Jesus*; while there is sufficient evidence that John's was not performed in that name. That it was not during the first stage of his ministry is certain, for he tells us himself that he did not know him at that time; and, if the Christian Baptism includes an acknowledgement of the Saviour actually crucified, he could not at any subsequent period baptize in the *name of Jesus*, as he was beheaded long before Jesus Christ was crucified.

"4. The case of the twelve disciples at Ephesus, mentioned in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts affords demonstrative evidence of what I am now contending for. For on what principle could St. Paul have baptized them, if they had received the same Baptism before?"

We think this sufficiently shows that John's Baptism was not the same with the Baptism administered by the Apostles; consequently, whatever his practice was, it is no example for Christians.

The *great* objection to sprinkling, brought from the Scriptures, is found in the Acts of the Apostles, viii. 38, 39, "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him; and when they were come up out of the water," &c. We find nothing in these passages that should lead us to decide that the Eunuch was immersed. For what is said of one, is said of the other also. They *both* went

down into the water, and they *both* came up *out* of the water. It is said that Philip baptized him. But I have no reason to believe that he *immersed* him; but I have good reason to conclude, that the mode practised was that of *sprinkling*. Philip found the Eunuch in his chariot, with the Scriptures in his hand, reading a certain prophecy concerning Christ, viz., Isa. lli. and liii. "At this Scripture, Philip began and preached Christ to him.—Acts viii. 35. In the last three verses of the fifty-second chapter, it was foretold that Christ should institute Baptism by *sprinkling*. "Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. So shall he sprinkle many nations." Now, it is very evident that Philip must have conversed with the Eunuch upon the subject of Baptism; because, as they were travelling along, the Eunuch exclaimed, "See here is water! what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Now, Philip's text taught the mode of *sprinkling*, and no other mode. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." Consequently we conclude that Philip *sprinkled* the Eunuch. Had he attempted to *immerse* him, is it not probable the Eunuch would have objected to the mode, and referred Philip to his own text which taught *sprinkling*? But it is quite probable that they went down to the brink of the water, where Philip might take some in his hand, and *sprinkle* him according to the prophecy which he had been expounding.

Much weight is laid upon the words "*into*" and "*out of*." They went down *into* the water, and they came up *out of* the water. But these terms do not prove that either Philip or the Eunuch was immersed under the water, or that either of them entered the water to his knees, or even to his ancles. Ex. xxiv. 12, 13, 15.—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me *into* the mount. And Moses went up *into* the mount of God." Also Ex. xxxiii. 1.—"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down *out of* the mount," &c. Now, will any person presume to say, that the phrases "*up into the mount*," and "*down out of the mount*," prove that the body of Moses was *immersed* under the surface of the mount? Or that he entered the earth which composed the mount to his knees, or even to his ancles? Again, Mat. v. 1.—"And seeing the multitudes, he went up *into a mountain*." Now, does this passage teach that any portion of the Saviour's body, was under the surface of the mountain? It is evident that neither Moses nor Christ entered into the element composing the mountain, but rather remained upon its surface. Therefore, the phrases, "*down into the water*," and "*up out the water*," do not prove that either Philip or the Eunuch stepped into the water, to the depth of one inch. The terms "*into*" and "*out of*," have various significations. "*Into*," in the original, properly signifies "*at*" or "*to*." While "*out of*" signifies "*from*." Consequently, it would be correct to read the

text thus: And they went down both to or at the verge of the water, and when they were come up from the water.

Some may say that those prophecies which speak of *sprinkling* do not intend Baptism. But it is evident there is no other ordinance in the Church of God to which they can refer. If they signify Baptism, then the Scriptures are not fulfilled, unless this sacrament be administered by *sprinkling*. These are sufficient reasons for believing, that Philip *sprinkled* the Eunuch.

Another *supposed* scriptural objection is found in Rom. vi. 4.—“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into his death.” Also, Col. ii. 12.—“Buried with him in baptism.” After quoting these passages in full, we shall endeavor to explain them. “Therefore, being buried with Christ by baptism into his death, that, like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.” For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; ~~intending~~ ^{knowing} this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should no more serve sin.” Col. ii. 9—12.—“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, &c. We have here the terms “planted,” “crucified,” and “buried.” They are figurative expressions; consequently, they do not intend the sign, but the reality; not the shadow, but the substance. “We are buried with him by baptism,” signifies that “our conformity (to Christ) is complete. We are in profession quite cut off from all commerce and communion with sin, as those that are buried are quite cut off from the world; not only not of the living, but no more *among* the living, have nothing more to do with them. Thus must we be as Christ was, separate from sin and sinners. We are buried in profession and obligation; we profess to be so, and we are bound to be so; it was our covenant and engagement in Baptism; we are sealed to be the Lord’s, therefore, to be cut off from sin.” Thus we discover that the phrase, “buried with him in Baptism,” has not the least allusion to the *mode* of baptizing. The circumstance of the Baptism of the Philippian jailer, is imagined by some, a strong proof against *sprinkling*, and in favor of *immersion*. But we cannot discover one word that affords the weakest evidence that immersion was the mode. We find in examination of that portion of Scripture, that Paul and Silas were confined in the inner prison. And at midnight there was an earthquake—the jailer became affrighted—assembled his family—received instruction from Paul—became convinced that the doctrines of the Christian religion were true—washed the apostles’ stripes—“and

was baptized, he and all his." All this appears to have transpired in the very short space of one hour—verse 33.—“And he took them the same hour,” &c. Therefore, their Baptism took place in the night. And we do not read that they left the prison, or that they prepared a fount or tank in the same. In fact, it appears truly satisfactory that they remained in the prison. The Roman laws were so stringent at that period, that the keeper of the prison was answerable with his own life for the safe-keeping of the prisoners. Consequently, when he awoke and found the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had escaped, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself. He would rather take his own life, than have it taken by others for neglect of duty. Now it does not appear reasonable, that he would accompany the apostles away from the prison, whence they might make their escape, and leave him to suffer the penalty. But the apostles were well acquainted with the stringency of the law in respect to prison-keepers. And we have too great confidence in their integrity, to fancy they would attempt to encourage him to leave the prison, and thus expose himself to difficulty. And, furthermore, Paul and Silas being unlawfully imprisoned, were firmly resolved to have recompense. For, the next day, when a request was sent them to leave the prison, they would not move one step until those same magistrates who had ordered them to be imprisoned, “would come themselves, and fetch them out.” It appears very satisfactory, from these statements, that the jailer was *sprinkled*.

Let us next examine the mode used in baptizing the three thousand upon the day of Pentecost. The apostles were all in an upper room, “and there they continued with one accord in prayer.” At the close of this exercise, Peter stood up and preached to the company assembled. After the close of the discourse, and the election of Matthias, to occupy the place of Judas, while they were all with one accord in one place (probably in the same upper room, as we do not read that they had yet left it,) the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and they talked in other tongues. This very remarkable occurrence was immediately advertised in the surrounding vicinity, and caused such great excitement that the multitude flocked together. We should here bear in mind that the apostles seem to be yet in the same “upper room.” Therefore the multitude must have assembled *in and about the house*. Peter standing up, preached to them. They were pricked in their hearts, and inquired, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. And ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. Then they gladly received the word, and were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand.”

Now, in all this, we have no account of their leaving the

house in quest of some stream or pond, in which they might immerse them. At any rate, we must confess that they were in Jerusalem; and when we consider that that city was so scantily supplied with water, as to oblige the inhabitants to depend upon their wells, cisterns, and aqueducts, for nearly all the water they used, we are at a loss to discover where they obtained a sufficiency to immerse so great a number. While, on the contrary, a single well would furnish a competent supply to *sprinkle* them. We understand that they were all baptized in about half a day. For it was nine in the morning when P  ter commenced his discourse, and undoubtedly it was quite lengthy, for he treated upon various subjects, and, as a matter of course, explained to the people the nature of Christian Baptism. Therefore, we conclude that it must have been about noon when they commenced to baptize. And we deem it preposterous to infer that they immersed three thousand in the short space of one half day, allowing that all the apostles were engaged in the work. But when we once allow that they were *sprinkled*, all difficulties in the matter disappear.

The mode by which the Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea, is worthy our notice, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2.—“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea.” Now, here were 620,000 Israelites in this company. “And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.” Ex xiv. 21. Again: “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.” Dry land was before, behind, and underfoot; the waters were piled up at a great distance upon each side, while the cloud was far overhead. And the Psalmist, while speaking of this very event, says: “The clouds *poured* out water.—Ps. lxxvii. 17. Our own experience has long since taught us that God’s mode of *pouring out*, or, in other words, *sending down* rain from the clouds, is *sprinkling*; for it always descends in *drops*, or what we might term *sprinklings*. Hence we arrive at the conclusion that the mode of this Baptism was *sprinkling*.

There are prophecies which relate to the use of water in the Redeemer’s kingdom. But those prophecies always speak of *pouring* or *sprinkling*. Isa. xlv. 3.—“I will *pour* water on him that is thirsty.” Again, lil. 15.—“So shall he *sprinkle* many nations.” Ez. xxxvi. 25.—“Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you.” Here God declares that he will *pour* and *sprinkle*, but he says nothing of *immersion*.

We now leave the subject with you; trusting that you will exercise candor in considering the matter. And we earnestly pray that you may all be baptized with the Holy Ghost, that you may be fully qualified to serve God here, and enjoy heaven hereafter.

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